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Chair: Ms. Nilsson (Vice-Chair) ..... (Sweden)

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In the absence of Ms. Mesquita Borges, Ms. Nilsson (Sweden), Vice-Chair, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 3 p.m.

Agenda item 26: Social development (*continued*)

(a) Implementation of the outcome of the World Summit for Social Development and of the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly (*continued*) (A/69/157)

(b) Social development, including questions relating to the world social situation and to youth, ageing, disabled persons and the family (*continued*) (A/69/61-E/2014/4 and A/69/187)

(c) Follow-up to the International Year of Older Persons: Second World Assembly on Ageing (*continued*) (A/69/180)

(d) Literacy for life: shaping future agendas (*continued*) (A/69/183)

1. **Mr. Grima** (Malta) said that his Government would shortly be launching Malta's first national disability policy and strategy, in line with the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. In order to provide the best possible service to persons with disabilities and their families, strengthened communication would be needed between such persons and the State, service providers and non-governmental organizations and the establishment of structures conducive to a good standard of living and quality of life. To complement the work of the National Commission for Persons with Disabilities, his Government had set up a focal point in every ministry. It had also enacted a Guardianship Act, which provided for the appointment of a guardian to safeguard the personal well-being and property of persons with disabilities and act on their behalf. An Adult Protection Act was currently being drafted, while the Equal Opportunities Act was being strengthened in consultation with the Federation of Organizations for Persons with Disabilities and the National Commission. A scheme had also been set up to encourage local councils to develop infrastructure projects that would ensure that all citizens had access to their communities.

2. The Parliamentary Secretary for Disability Rights and Active Aging was exploring methods of strengthening the role of non-governmental organizations through sharing responsibility with such organizations and increasing their involvement in the delivery of services provided by both the State and the private sector. A review of the current benefits system was also being undertaken to determine how best to address the needs of persons with disabilities. His Government was also seeking to invest with the private sector in development projects aimed at responding to the everyday needs of such persons and their families. Persons with disabilities were encouraged to engage in mainstream and specialized arts and sports activities, which were a valuable means of achieving social inclusion. Further progress depended on the implementation of a flexible welfare system that sought to empower persons with disabilities and reward their initiatives, which would require harmonization and coordination, and a synergy of ideas and sharing of experiences among all relevant stakeholders.

3. **Mr. Manzlawiy** (Saudi Arabia) said that his Government spared no effort in striving to achieve social development. At the national level, the King Abdul Aziz Centre for National Dialogue administered training programmes that equipped family members with dialogue and communication skills and educated citizens on how to use technology while avoiding its detrimental effects. Saudi Arabia had also adopted policies and enacted legislation to improve the socioeconomic situation of older persons, promote their integration into society and protect their legal rights.

4. His Government had taken a wide range of measures to meet the needs of persons with disabilities, including making major cities, land and sea transport networks and tourism and lodging facilities accessible to such persons, employing persons with disabilities in the public and private sectors, and providing them with tax exemptions in respect of domestic workers in their employ and discounts on public transportation for themselves and their companions.

5. With regard to youth, the Ministry of Economy and Planning had developed a national youth strategy aimed at addressing their needs, involving them in decision-making and encouraging their participation as part of national delegations in international conferences. Furthermore, Saudi Arabian youth had had the opportunity to visit a number of countries and gain international experience in the context of a series of forums for international dialogue and youth

exchange and study programmes sponsored by his Government.

6. Saudi Arabia was a party to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and its Optional Protocol and the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing, as well as a sponsor of numerous General Assembly resolutions on social development. His Government urged developed countries to provide more support to developing countries for social development, bearing in mind that to be successful, development programmes and policies must take into account the basic needs of each country, engage people in the formulation process and employ best practices.

7. **Ms. Greppler** and **Mr. Solmus** (Germany), speaking as youth delegates, said that they represented 20 million young people under the age of 25 living in Germany, and 7 billion people worldwide. People of all ages needed to work together in tackling challenges that could only be faced together, including formulating and implementing policies and programmes at all levels to combat all forms of age-based discrimination against older as well as younger persons. The rights of youth were also human rights, and transcended any categorization. Diversity should be recognized as an opportunity and an inspiration rather than a source of conflict and hatred. An individual's right to self-determination was essential to the development of any society. All Governments should adopt an inclusive and representative system of legislation at all levels and ensure full participation in policy formulation. Quality education for all was another prerequisite for effective participation and was essential to global understanding and global citizenship. Citizens should not be under constant surveillance. The future should consist of a two-way communication process, with the participation and representation of all. Dialogue was essential to the promotion of trust.

8. **Ms. Elio Mansilla** (Plurinational State of Bolivia) said that her Government was striving to reduce inequality and extreme poverty and had achieved significant progress in that regard, thanks to the nationalization of the oil and gas industry and other sectors. Through the provision of cash incentives, the school dropout rate had fallen to under 2 per cent. Chronic malnutrition in children under the age of two had fallen to 15 per cent, and the impressive literacy rate of 99 per cent among young people aged 15 to 24 was due to her Government's national literacy programme, and its cooperation with Cuba and Venezuela. School attendance among young girls aged six to nine had increased from 78 per cent in 2001 to 83 per cent in 2013. The Plurinational State of Bolivia had also seen a decline in maternal and infant mortality, which was associated with the provision of vouchers for pregnant women and children up to the age of two Decent homes had been built for the most vulnerable populations, mainly indigenous families, land ownership had been increased, and potable water was now available in all municipalities, with 75 per cent of the population able to access it.

9. The Bolivian Constitution protected the rights of persons with disabilities to education, health care, communication, decent and appropriate work, fair remuneration, and the opportunity to develop their individual potential. Her Government had also determined that funds formerly received by political parties for their campaigns should henceforth be used to improve the life and working conditions of persons with disabilities. The Constitution also protected the rights of youth and promoted their active participation in productive, political, social, economic and cultural development. The growing population of older persons posed a challenge to social policies. In response, Bolivia had developed a national policy on ageing, designed to protect the fundamental rights of older persons, 65 per cent of whom lived in poverty.

10. Although some progress had been made, it would be challenging to build a "society for all" given the current financial and economic crisis, and the energy, water and worsening food crises caused by agrofuel production. The United Nations had an important role to play in supporting national policies and in creating conditions that were conducive to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals.

11. **Mr. Rosa** (Honduras), speaking as a youth delegate, said that his presence at the United Nations was the first time his country had sent a representative of young Hondurans. His Government's 2006 ratification of the Ibero-American Convention for the Rights of the Youth demonstrated its recognition of the importance of promoting the human rights of youth and its acknowledgment of their contribution to the national development process. Young people were increasingly being included in the national dialogue, particularly policy formulation. However, limited resources continued to restrict their opportunities for development, particularly in rural areas. The President

of Honduras had invited the international community and foreign companies to invest in Honduras with a view to creating more opportunities, particularly for youth. The Better Life programme had been created to reduce youth violence via projects for at-risk youth. His Government invited all Member States to support projects that promoted the inclusion of the youth in co-curricular and extracurricular activities, which deterred young people from participating in socially detrimental activities and promoted their integral development.

12. **Ms. Cedeño Rengifo** (Panama) said that global efforts to eradicate poverty needed to be intensified, especially in the most marginalized areas. Her Government was focusing particularly on early childhood and on indigenous peoples, who were particularly impacted by poverty. To promote social inclusion and reduce inequality in all sectors of society, it was implementing a number of programmes to eradicate delinquency, combat extreme poverty, provide financial support to severely disabled persons and at-risk older persons and reduce the school drop-out rate

13. As the population of older persons steadily increased and that of young persons decreased, Panama was taking steps to guarantee the well-being of each group. It had the resources and institutional capacity to achieve sustainable change, and would collaborate with the international community to determine policies, strategies and programmes to reduce the wide gaps that hindered the full integration of the entire population in the development process.

14. **Mr. Boukadoum** (Algeria) said that in recent years, his Government had implemented three economic development plans with a view to meeting the growing demand for housing, health, food, transportation and access to water and public services. Substantial public investment had led to a significant increase in the gross domestic product and the poverty rate had been reduced by half. His Government had put in place special incentive mechanisms to strengthen investment in job-creating industries and promote the development of small and medium-sized enterprises, which had led to a decrease in the national unemployment rate from 15 per cent in 2005 to less than 10 per cent in 2012. It provided incentives to support the education of children from poor families, and as a result, the school enrolment rate had reached almost 100 per cent for children aged 6 to 15 years. Algeria had also implemented measures to ensure health coverage for vulnerable populations, which had led to improved national public health indicators. In particular, the infant and maternal mortality rates had declined significantly and average life expectancy had increased to nearly 76 years.

15. The rights of persons with disabilities, particularly access to health care, education and training, were guaranteed under the Constitution. A National Commission on Accessibility had been established in 2011 to ensure compliance with the technical standards that provided for the physical, social, economic and cultural access of persons with disabilities.

16. In line with the Political Declaration and Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing, his Government was committed to strengthening the economic and social integration of older persons through a holistic approach to ageing. Laws, regulations and policies to promote and protect the rights of older persons were in process of being adopted. Budgets at the national and subnational levels provided for sufficient support for the ageing population.

17. **Ms. Kahara** (Kenya), speaking as a youth delegate, expressed sympathy for those impacted by the Ebola crisis. Emergency situations caused needed resources to be diverted from economic and social development strategies to humanitarian and life-saving initiatives.

18. Kenya had long been a stable hub for regional trade and investment, and had hosted and educated generations of refugees from neighbouring Somalia, South Sudan and Ethiopia, at major strain to its own social services. There was a very clear link between Kenya's refugee problem and economic development, environmental degradation and security, all of which had a significant impact on social development.

19. Her Government was working to provide access to quality education, training and skills development; economic empowerment; access to information and to affordable credit; and technology transfer. To that end, it had introduced credit access initiatives that targeted youth, women and people with disabilities to encourage job creation and spur growth, as well as a policy to set aside 30 per cent of all Government contracts for those groups.

20. Despite their resilience and capability, many young people were unable to convert their potential into productive livelihoods. The resulting frustration left a significant number of them vulnerable to criminal activity, violence, substance abuse, and sexual exploitation. The international community should not rest until all young people had access to education, training and the capital necessary to pursue a decent living. All young people should be fully mainstreamed into economic development and empowered to realize their civil and political rights. Change should be effected on a global level to ensure the prosperity of future generations.

21. Implementation of the World Programme of Action for Youth would ensure increased youth participation and representation. Kenya's National Youth Council served as a voice for youth and provided a resourced and functional youth engagement framework. The new Constitution provided for youth involvement and participation in socioeconomic and political development, including elective and appointive positions. The number of youths elected and appointed to Parliament and county assemblies in the 2013 general elections had been the highest in Kenya's electoral history. The United Nations Development Programme in Kenya had partnered with her Government in various youth empowerment programmes including in the areas of governance, political participation and entrepreneurship. Kenya hosted the largest number of United Nations Volunteers in the world. Her Government had established a national volunteer programme modelled on international standards in which university graduates were deployed country-wide to share their expertise and provide service in the areas of health, education and other areas of economic development.

22. **Mr. Nina** (Albania) said that Albania was addressing the challenge of unemployment through a national strategy that sought to adjust vocational education and training to the needs of the national labour market for the period 2014-2020. Over the past year, employment offices throughout the country had filled more than 11,590 job vacancies and provided employment mediation services to over 6,000 persons. His Government had recently tripled its employment promotion fund, which had resulted in a quadrupling of the number of applications by businesses and the employment of over 3,000 persons.

23. Efforts to define the post-2015 development agenda should build on the Millennium Development Goals and go beyond them, including in building stronger global partnerships. In that regard, the reports of the Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals and of the Intergovernmental Committee of Experts on Sustainable Development Financing provided a useful basis for intergovernmental negotiations. Albania would contribute fully to the effort to guarantee a rights-based and inclusive post-2015 agenda.

24. His Government continued to attach priority to ensuring respect for the rights and well-being of older persons. In view of current demographic trends, there was an urgent need to address the rights of older persons in every society. In that regard, his delegation welcomed the recommendations contained in paragraph 71 of the Secretary-General's report (A/69/180) and would continue its active engagement in the work of the Open-ended Working Group on Ageing.

25. His Government also attached priority to the protection and promotion of the human rights of disabled person, which were guaranteed under the Constitution and existing laws. Efforts to promote the participation of disabled persons had included the adoption of a national action plan to implement the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the development of a programme to encourage the employment of persons with disabilities. Two persons with disabilities had been appointed to high-level Government positions in the past year and his Government had launched an inter-institutional initiative aimed at identifying and overcoming barriers to accessibility of public buildings. An inter-ministerial group was working to formalize sign language for deaf persons. Hi Government was aware that persons with disabilities still faced barriers, socioeconomic difficulties and discrimination, and was committed to working with persons with disabilities and their organizations to overcome them.

26. **Ms. Smaila** (Nigeria) said that it was a matter of great concern that the Millennium Development Goals relating to poverty and unemployment remained unfulfilled owing to insufficient progress in reaching the millions of people living in poverty in developing countries, particularly the least developed countries and Sub-Saharan Africa. The principles of empowerment, social integration and social justice

were among the fundamental objectives of State policy in Nigeria and were reflected in the country's Constitution. However, much more needed to be done to ensure the implementation of the outcome of the World Summit for Social Development and of the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly.

27. International instruments relating to social development continued to guide relevant national policies. Steps taken to implement those instruments had included the creation of a national youth development policy and a draft national policy on ageing, the implementation of programmes for the economic integration of older persons and the formulation of a draft national framework and plan of action aimed at promoting the economic empowerment of families, especially vulnerable households. Her Government had also launched a series of programmes that focused on poverty eradication, socioeconomic empowerment and skills development.

28. With regard to the empowerment of persons with disabilities, Nigeria had ratified International Labour Organization Convention (No. 159) on the vocational rehabilitation and employment of disabled persons. . It was conducting an advocacy and awareness-raising campaign on the issue of accessibility of public buildings and facilities and had organized a national trade fair and exhibition in August 2014 to showcase and market products made by persons with disabilities. It continued to encourage the participation of persons with disabilities in global sports, and remained fully committed to promoting the inclusion of vulnerable groups in its national development agenda.

29. **Mr. Kogda** (Burkina Faso) said that the global progress made toward economic empowerment, creation of employment opportunities for youth, and integration of the concerns of older persons and persons with disabilities into national development policies was evidence of the strong individual and collective commitment to building a better and more inclusive world. His Government had prioritized improvement in social development indicators, an aim that was reflected in the national five-year development programme, which placed human capital at the centre of development efforts. Several policies had been implemented that addressed the needs of vulnerable groups, including a national social protection policy aimed at improving the situation of at-risk populations, especially in rural areas, and a national solidarity charter aimed at strengthening social cohesion.

30. Burkina Faso had adopted substantial laws and regulations to protect the rights of persons with disabilities and had allocated significant financial and material resources to the holistic care of disabled persons, particularly children, in 2014. It was currently undertaking the first general census of children with disabilities, which would enable more effective Government action in that area.

31. Employment, education and vocational training were key concerns in a country of which 80 per cent of the population was under 35 years of age. Relevant efforts had included the implementation of a strategic framework for accelerated growth and sustainable development that took into account the aspirations and needs of all social groups, including youth and women, and the convening of an annual national youth forum. A national youth policy covering the period from 2015 to 2024 was also being adopted. Recognizing the ongoing challenges posed to the stability and cohesion of the family, his Government had defined several sectoral policies designed to improve the living conditions of families. It remained committed to ensuring the social inclusion of vulnerable groups, a precondition for sustainable development.

32. **Ms. Mogobe** (Botswana) said that her Government's efforts to promote inclusive economic and social development continued to be guided by the priorities identified during the World Summit for Social Development. Botswana remained firmly committed to addressing the challenges of deep poverty, lack of decent employment, especially for youth, rising social inequality and exclusion, and accessibility of potable water, sanitation, food, shelter, quality education and health care faced by many of its citizens.

33. Her Government had succeeded in reducing poverty levels from 30 per cent in 2002 to 19 per cent in 2009, and, in 2009, had implemented a national flagship programme aimed at full poverty eradication. It had achieved universal access to education and ensured that every citizen was within eight kilometres of a health facility. Committed to the protection of vulnerable groups, especially women, children, youth, older persons and persons with disabilities, against social exploitation, abuse and violence, her Government was implementing programmes to ensure

the participation of those groups in all spheres of national life.

34. Despite the notable progress made, national development efforts continued to be hindered by the protracted impact of the global recession, volatile food and fuel prices, and climate change. Strengthened collaboration with the United Nations system and development partners was therefore essential to enhance national capacity. In that respect, Botswana supported the recommendation contained in the report of the Secretary-General (A/69/187) for the establishment of a coordinating mechanism within the United Nations system that would effectively respond to needs for technical assistance.

35. **Mr. Golitsyn** (Ukraine) said that, according to a national report, 90 per cent of Ukrainians had chosen social justice as a top priority for the post-2015 development agenda. His Government had therefore aligned its efforts with relevant international social development policies and programmes to advance that aim.

36. Ukraine's progress in the context of the Millennium Development Goals had been severely disrupted by the conflict provoked in its two eastern regions and the illegal annexation of Crimea. Serious ceasefire violations, increasing displacement and irresponsible acts of illegal militants were contributing to a devastating situation in which 5.1 million citizens were living in conflict-affected areas. Protection of those persons was a key priority for his Government, which had established aid and support mechanisms that specifically addressed the needs of internally displaced persons and participants in anti-terrorist operations. However, it would need support in scaling up the response to meet the basic humanitarian needs of the affected population, with winter approaching. With expert technical support, it had established a system of registration of internally displaced persons. Ukraine called upon partners to support the launch of its Preliminary Response Plan aimed at addressing the needs of thousands of Ukrainians who were starting to rebuild their lives.

37. **Mr. Hahn** Choonghee (Republic of Korea) said that the Republic of Korea's emphasis on quality education for all had been a key factor driving the rapid economic and social development from the 1970s to the 1990s and had demonstrated how a highly empowered people could become agents of change. Basic social protection schemes such as income support for vulnerable people and universal health care had also played a critical role in empowering people and stimulating economic development.

38. To promote institutional transparency and accountability, his Government had launched an initiative aimed at enhancing the problem-solving capacity of the public sector while harnessing the creative power of the private sector. Measures taken to address the needs of vulnerable groups included the development of policies and programmes aimed at reducing youth unemployment by providing vocational training and the introduction of a paradigm shift in nearly all Government policies and programmes to address the needs of an ageing population. Steps were being taken to promote work-life balance in order to encourage family integration and advance the role of women in society. Laws had been revised to minimize restrictions on the legal capacity of persons with disabilities, thereby allowing them to exercise greater ownership in their decision-making; persons with disabilities were recognized not only as beneficiaries, but also as agents of development, when their potential was tapped.

39. **Ms. Park** Yeji (Republic of Korea), speaking as a youth delegate, said that efforts to define the post-2015 development agenda could not neglect the social dimension of sustainable development. Strategic and concrete action was required to eliminate poverty and discrimination and achieve full and decent employment. The role of empowerment in bolstering the social drivers of sustainable development had been evidenced by the successful rebuilding of the Republic of Korea following the Korean war, an effort achieved primarily through the country's investment in its own people. Much progress still needed to be made, both domestically and internationally, in the area of social inclusion, particularly in the face of unequal global wealth distribution. It was therefore crucial to promote not only equal opportunities, but also equal outcomes, and to expand the notion and scope of education to include the teaching of global citizenship values including human rights, rule of law and democracy.

40. The Republic of Korea had been using its position at the forefront of the information technology revolution to promote global efforts for social inclusion through information technology education programmes for persons with disabilities, older persons and immigrant families in order to narrow the digital

divide, expand social participation and promote economic independence. It had provided information technology training courses in over 50 developing countries. Aware of the debt owed to the international community for its instrumental role in their country's dramatic post-war rebirth, Korean youth were committed to participating in the efforts to create an inclusive and sustainable world.

41. **Mr. Barros Melet** (Chile) said that, since adopting the Millennium Declaration, his Government's primary aim had been to halve the proportion of its population subsisting on less than $1.25 per day and the number of people suffering from hunger, in a context in which roughly 40 per cent of the population had been living in poverty in 1990. By 2010, his Government had reduced the poverty rate by more than half and the rate of extreme poverty to 3 per cent, in addition to expanding basic social services. It was currently developing social policies aimed at establishing a rights-based social protection system with clear social guarantees. Despite the progress achieved, significant challenges remained, above all the reduction of broad social inequality, which would be the target of public policies over the next few years. Bearing in mind that full participation and empowerment were required to achieve inclusive development, his Government was focusing on improving income distribution, promoting education reform, reducing pervasive gender inequality through the advancement of a new gender agenda, and promoting inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full employment and decent work through policies designed to create employment opportunities in the public and private sectors.

42. National policies with respect to older persons focused on advancing a rights-based and cross-cutting approach on the part of the public administration, promoting social participation, strengthening the social protection system, and decentralizing the work of the National Service for Ageing in order to respond more effectively to the needs of older persons throughout the country. Chile continued to support the adoption of a comprehensive international legal instrument to promote and protect the rights and dignity of older persons.

43. Chile called upon all Member States and relevant stakeholders to commemorate the twentieth anniversary of the World Summit for Social Development in 2015 by renewing their commitment to poverty eradication, decent employment and social inclusion within the framework of the post-2015 development agenda and sustainable development goals. It called for the organization of a commemorative side event by the General Assembly at its seventieth session and for the incorporation of an item on the commemoration in the agendas of the Economic and Social Council and of the Commission for Social Development.

44. **Mr. Shakulashvili** (Georgia), speaking as a youth delegate, said that young people in Georgia faced the same challenges as those confronted by youth throughout the world, including unemployment, unequal access to information, uneven regional development, lack of educational opportunities and respect for human rights, and barriers to social participation. Inequalities between rural and urban youth populations in Georgia were wider than ever, and there was a high demand for decent libraries, particularly in rural areas.

45. Increased participation of youth in international affairs was critical for achieving sustainable development. To that end, Georgian youth welcomed the establishment of youth advisory councils that would allow them to participate more effectively in local decision-making, as well as the expansion of political education platforms such as the Model United Nations. In a country that had experienced several waves of armed conflict, population displacement and ethnic cleansing over the past two decades and continued to suffer under the occupation of 20 per cent of its territory, the presence of international organizations and of internationally-sponsored programmes aimed at boosting youth participation and engagement were crucial to addressing the needs of over 400,000 internally displaced persons and refugees. The Millennium Development Goals could not be achieved without the full realization of the rights of young people living under foreign occupation. Member States must take concrete steps in accordance with the World Programme of Action for Youth to involve youth in actions for conflict prevention, reconciliation and peacebuilding.

46. Georgian youth agreed that no progress could be achieved without the full participation of young people with disabilities, a group that was disproportionately affected by unemployment. To that end, young Georgians could play a key role in overseeing the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of

Persons with Disabilities and its translation into national law.

47. Young Georgian women were eager to participate in combating the gender stereotypes that perpetuated discrimination and violence against them, and to contribute to efforts to mainstream a gender perspective at the national level. While a number of initiatives aimed at empowering girls were already in place, further international assistance was needed to expand those efforts and to encourage men and boys to take responsibility for their behaviour and attitudes.

48. In response to increased demand for vocational education and skills development, the national Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs had committed to build ten regional centres for vocational education in 2015. It had also launched a youth ambassador project aimed at increasing youth participation in representing Georgia at the international level. Georgian youth appreciated the role of international scholarship programmes in providing opportunities for youth exchange and empowerment.

49. **Ms. Sameer** (Maldives) said that goals identified at the International Conference on Population and Development and in the report of the Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals provided the basis for a balanced global sustainable development agenda. Aware of the critical role of empowerment in realizing social development outcomes, the Maldives had consistently invested in its people and had witnessed a steady improvement in human development over the years. Youth engagement was the starting point of social development; her Government had established the country's first university in 2012, thereby expanding education beyond universal primary and secondary schooling, and had also formulated a youth bill and youth health strategy. Persistent unemployment was nevertheless contributing to an increased prevalence of drug abuse, delinquency and gang culture, challenges the Maldives was seeking to address through bold initiatives such as its youth city project, which aimed to break the cycle of poverty by providing a hub for employment and innovation. Gender parity, along with youth advocacy, was a pillar of a stable society. The Maldives had therefore formalized a guarantee of equal pay for equal work and a three-month paid maternity leave requirement through legislation that included its Employment Act of 2008.

50. The Constitution of the Maldives guaranteed the protection of vulnerable groups, including persons with disabilities and older persons, and banned all forms of discrimination. Measures taken to protect older persons included the establishment of a retirement and pension scheme and the formulation of a policy to address the financial security, long-term health care, shelter, institutional care and legal protection of senior citizens, in partnership with civil society organizations. In accordance with its commitment to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, the Maldives had enacted a law in 2011 to protect the human rights of persons with disabilities, and had adopted policies to provide social housing for persons with disabilities and access to special education for disabled children.

51 Unequal income distribution remained a major challenge, which the Maldives was seeking to address through the provision of loans to small and medium-sized enterprises, in addition to a national effort to diversify its economy, increase vocational training and skills development and expand employment opportunities. The challenges of climate change, which severely undermined all aspects of sustainable development, particularly for small island developing States, could not be ignored. The Maldives' sovereignty, viability and survival depended upon the global reduction of carbon emissions and integration of climate resilience pathways in the post-2015 development agenda.

52. **Mr. Giorgio** (Eritrea) said that the rate of unemployment and underemployment among young Africans remained a source of concern and as such, demanded urgent action by all stakeholders. Eritrean youth were engaged in activities that contributed to addressing the root causes of poverty and underdevelopment. Food security, basic service delivery and environmental programmes were being diligently implemented. His Government was committed to fostering grass-roots involvement in the design and implementation of development programmes.

53. His Government was devoting the lion's share of the national budget to education, and provided free education at all levels. It had also intensified its adult literacy programme, 95 per cent of whose participants were women. With regard to health, Eritrea was on track to achieve three of the Millennium Development Goals and had already attained goals 4, 5 and 6.

54. Despite its firm commitment to ensuring social protection for all, especially the disadvantaged and the poor, Eritrea was confronted with two major obstacles, namely, the unjust and politically motivated imposition of sanctions on the Eritrean people and the occupation of sovereign Eritrean territory, in violation of the Charter of the United Nations. Putting an immediate end to both the sanctions and the occupation would contribute significantly to development efforts, including youth empowerment and employment.

55. **Ms. Maduhu** (United Republic of Tanzania) said that promoting the empowerment of people in order to eradicate poverty and achieve social integration and full employment was a policy priority for her Government, which had established formal structures and institutions that encouraged meaningful participation. It had also put in place a decentralization programme to devolve powers to local governments and policies targeting vulnerable groups.

56. Tanzania provided universal primary education and was currently working to expand access to quality education at all levels, including alternative learning opportunities for illiterate adults and children not enrolled in school. Moreover, colleges and vocational centres were being strengthened to provide demand-driven training and skills. From 2001 to 2013, her Government had added over 4,000 schools, and the number of secondary school students had more than tripled. Despite its achievements, Tanzania faced a number of challenges, including the quality of education, retention, the lack of skilled teachers, E-learning facilities and books and the high proportion of illiterate women. However, her Government was making active efforts to surmount those difficulties. In that context, it welcomed initiatives by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization to close the gender gap in education.

57. Recognizing that investments in public health enabled people to lead healthier and more productive lives, her Government continued to expand and increase the availability of primary health care facilities, basic services, and emergency obstetric and neonatal care nationwide. It invited partners and stakeholders to assist it in addressing existing challenges in the health sector.

58. Given that poverty and disability were closely linked, persons with disabilities must be involved in and regarded as active participants and beneficiaries of development. In that connection, the unfortunate oversight of the needs of persons with disabilities in the Millennium Development Goals framework must be redressed in the post-2015 development agenda. For its part, her Government had enacted national legislation and policies to ensure the representation of persons with disabilities in Parliament and attend to their needs. Nevertheless, it continued to face obstacles in removing barriers to education for children with disabilities and obtaining the necessary resources to implement its policies. She therefore called on development partners to assist developing countries in building the financial and human resource capacity to respond to the specific needs of persons with disabilities.

59. **Mr. Elbahi** (Sudan) said that the global financial crisis, fluctuations in food prices, increased energy costs, climate change and security crises were putting social development at risk and impeding fulfilment of the commitments made in the Copenhagen Declaration and Programme of Action.

60. In the Sudan, political stability was a prerequisite for social development. The comprehensive national dialogue initiative recently launched by his Government had brought together representatives from all groups of Sudanese society, with a view to addressing six priorities: peace and unity, the economy, fundamental rights and freedoms, identity, foreign relations and governance issues and the implementation of the dialogue's outcome. The initiative, which had met with an unprecedented response from all political groups in the Sudan and the international community, was expected to pave the way to stability and sustainable development for all by yielding a national consensus on the Sudan's political future.

61. His Government had enacted a comprehensive anti-poverty programme that focused on creating jobs, expanding education, eradicating illiteracy, providing medical care, supplying potable water, protecting the environment and ensuring food security. The Diwan al-Zakat social care agency, alongside the Department of Waqfs and civil society organizations, was strengthening social protection by supporting sanitation projects, religious education and higher education and had become a powerful tool for eradicating poverty and achieving social justice.

62. Measures adopted to address the needs of persons with disabilities and older persons included facilitating their access to health care and putting in place social programmes aimed at creating a family environment for them. The Sudan had established a National Council for Persons with Disabilities and laid out a five-year plan for persons with disabilities for the period 2012-2016 that stressed health, education, awareness-raising, economic empowerment, legal support and social, cultural and political inclusion. His Government had also established the National Authority for Prosthetics and Orthotics, which met domestic and regional demand for prosthetic limbs. Lastly, he stressed that donor countries should fulfil their assistance commitments and act to cancel the debts of developing countries.

63. **Mr. Zamora Rivas** (El Salvador) said that his Government remained firmly committed to combating poverty and inequality and promoting the empowerment and active participation of citizens as agents of development. It had intensified efforts to safeguard the economic, social, cultural and environmental rights of all Salvadorans, including historically marginalized groups such as indigenous persons, persons discriminated against on grounds of their gender or sexual orientation, youth, older persons and persons with disabilities.

64. Action to uphold the rights of persons with disabilities had been stepped up. The Special Rapporteur on Disability had visited El Salvador in November 2013 and, in his preliminary report, had commended El Salvador's clear commitment to address disability issues, its inclusive education programmes and the large number of persons with disabilities in formal employment. The report had also highlighted the positive role played by the National Council for Persons with Disabilities and the coordination between his Government and disability organizations and the "Ciudad Mujer" programme, which offered a variety of services to women, including women with disabilities. Much work still remained to be done, but El Salvador was firmly committed to promoting the empowerment of persons with disabilities.

65. Young people needed to be viewed as agents of change capable of making decisions and formulating proposals for the development of society as a whole. His Government therefore fully supported regional and international forums that offered youth the opportunity to express their opinions on the development agenda beyond 2015. Its youth policy was the result of a national dialogue held with over 8,000 young persons that aimed to promote their political, social, cultural and economic participation. His Government had also launched a second violence-prevention project involving youth with a view to improving social cohesion and tackling the risk factors associated with violence and juvenile delinquency.

66. In regard to older persons, he stressed that the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing did not address all the needs or legal gaps as far as the protection of older persons' rights and their inclusion in development were concerned. His Government therefore attached great importance to the formulation of an international convention on the protection and promotion of the rights of older persons.

67. **Mr. Al-Eryani** (Yemen) said that, as one of the poorest countries in the region, Yemen faced considerable challenges in the area of social development. Roughly half of its inhabitants lived under the poverty line and grappled with food insecurity, severe malnutrition and water scarcity. The political developments of the previous three years had led to a sharp rise in unemployment and hampered his Government's capacity to provide primary health care, education and other services and respond to widespread humanitarian need, as did the country's rugged terrain and population distribution. Rural-urban exodus compounded the existing pressure on social services and already scarce employment opportunities. Meanwhile, crime and theft, especially in poor urban areas, overcrowding and poor ventilation in residential districts, and ongoing displacement as a result of internal conflicts further exacerbated the situation.

68. Measures under his Government's 2012-2014 programme to alleviate the humanitarian plight of the population included creating suitable conditions for the return of displaced persons, who currently numbered over half a million; strengthening cooperation and coordination of the humanitarian response among relevant agencies; enhancing the capacity of local communities to address humanitarian challenges; and linking short-term humanitarian and long-term development interventions.

69. The comprehensive National Dialogue Conference, which aimed to provide training for young officials to help build the new Yemen, had established quotas for the representation of women and youth in

Government bodies. Moreover, the Ministry of Youth and Sport was working to provide support for scholastic and women's sports, organize activities for persons with special needs and establish technical and vocational training institutes for youth. A national strategy for childhood and youth covering the period from 2006 to 2015 had been adopted, and several projects had been established to attend to the humanitarian needs of the population, especially the most vulnerable groups, and to help develop their skills. The outcome of the National Dialogue Conference exemplified what the Yemeni people had achieved since the political transition had begun. Further gains would be contingent on the continued support of the international community. The proliferation of violence and extremism had been and continued to be fuelled by the country's dire socioeconomic situation. In closing, he reiterated Yemen's commitment to the Copenhagen Declaration and Programme of Action and the outcome of the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly.

70. **Ms. Karabaeva** (Kyrgyzstan) said that deep poverty, isolation, high transport costs and debt were the main problems faced by mountain States. Such problems increased when States were isolated geographically and had no access to maritime ports. In such circumstances it was difficult to achieve the Millennium Development Goals and it was therefore important to give special attention to mountain States in the future.

71. The Kyrgyz Republic was committed to sustainable development, which was reflected in its 2013-2017 National Sustainable Development Strategy. The principles of sustainable development were also integrated in national programmes and government activities. In 2012, her Government had adopted the Social Protection Development Strategy for 2012-2014, the aim of which was to improve the situation of older persons and persons with disabilities. An updated Social Development Programme for 2015-2017 was currently being developed. Kyrgyzstan had signed the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and had become a party to the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing. It was working in close cooperation with the United Nations to develop social policy for older persons, taking into account Convention No. 102 of the International Labour Organization concerning Minimum Standards of Social Security.

72. Young people were particularly affected by unemployment and made up a large proportion of those employed in the informal sector and in low-paying jobs. Youth employment was one of the priority development areas in Kyrgyzstan and an Outline of State Youth Policy up to the year 2015 had been adopted. It was extremely important to strengthen international cooperation in providing quality education and employment for young people, preventing crime and promoting social integration.

73. Considering that remittances by migrant workers had increased substantially over the past few decades, and that a substantial proportion of those funds was spent on food, housing, health protection and education, the interrelationship between migration and development must be taken into account. The significant contribution of migrants to the development process should be appropriately reflected in the post-2015 development agenda.

74. **Ms. Melón** (Argentina) said that Argentina was strengthening various aspects of its human development policy, with a rights-based focus that pursued sustainable and inclusive development strategies and was centred on the individual, the family and the community. It was working to protect all types of families and strengthen community organizations while acknowledging the fundamental role played by the State. Goals included ensuring universal access to health care, increasing the participation of older persons, youth and children, narrowing social inequality gaps, addressing the needs of persons with disabilities and protecting the rights of indigenous persons. Social justice and the promotion of human rights were key objectives of Argentine social action and policy. Local authorities and organizations were accorded a key role in determining investment and action priorities. .

75. Poverty eradication remained a core objective. Although extreme poverty had been reduced by more than half, despite the major economic and financial crises of 2001 and 2008, and the overall poverty rate had fallen sharply, eradicating extreme poverty completely would not be achieved without a reversal of the current trend towards growing inequality in the world. Deep asymmetries between developed and developing countries persisted and were not always accurately reflected in statistical indicators, particularly those used by the World Bank, which were based solely on income.

76. People-centred social development must be accorded priority in the post-2015 development agenda. The drafting of that agenda should be guided by the 17 goals and their associated targets identified by the Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals. The issues had been discussed in depth by the participating States, civil society organizations and international bodies and must not be subjected now to partial or hasty renegotiations.

77. Progress in the protection and promotion of the rights of older persons must continue. The ageing of the population was transforming societies and called for a new, stereotype- and prejudice-free paradigm that would guarantee equal rights for all. It was now time for the Member States to discuss the details of an international convention on the subject, which would not only fill regulatory gaps, but also guarantee older persons their full participation and help address discrimination, indifference and abuse issues.

78. **Mr. Cassidy** (International Labour Organization) said that decent work, by its very nature, was empowering, due to its ability to effect positive change in people's lives at the national and local levels. The concept of decent work was based on the understanding that work was a source of personal dignity, family and community stability, viable democracies and economic growth that expanded opportunities for productive jobs and enterprise development. The proposal by the Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals to include a goal on inclusive growth and full and productive employment and decent work for all, as well as a target on social protection, provided a solid framework for action that could contribute to poverty eradication, reduce inequalities, improve health, education and food security outcomes and promote inclusive growth.

79. Efforts to increase trade and promote investment liberalization and infrastructure spending would be insufficient to improve economic and social development unless they were accompanied by measures to boost employment and decent work opportunities and tackle working poverty. Economic transformation and growth helped create opportunities for decent work to flourish, and more and better jobs fed back into the growth dynamic, making it more inclusive and sustainable. However, decent work required job-rich growth strategies, active labour market policies, economic diversification into high value-added sectors and improved working conditions which nurtured productivity. Enabling conditions were needed to facilitate the transition from the informal to the formal economy and boost the development of micro-, small and medium enterprises. For their part, businesses must increase investments into productive capacities, promote creativity and innovation and invest in developing a well-trained workforce capable of adapting to changing market conditions.

80. Between 2015 and 2030, about 670 million jobs would need to be created to contain the current spread of unemployment and cope with the growth in the working age population. Globally, 75 million youth were unemployed, and the proportion of youth not in employment, education or training was increasing in most countries, threatening to break societies and leave scars on an entire generation. The quality of jobs was as important as the quantity; one in two workers worldwide was self-employed or an unpaid family worker, and one in four was obliged to support a family on less than $2 a day.

81. The International Labour Organization had conducted school-to-work transition surveys in 28 countries and had used the results to design capacity-building tools and training programmes on youth employment. It had also worked with the International Organisation of Employers on their Global Apprenticeships Network to increase quality apprenticeships. He encouraged Member States to ratify the new 2014 ILO protocol to the Forced Labour Convention and the Forced Labour (Supplementary Measures) Recommendation, No. 203, which emphasized the link between forced labour and human trafficking and created specific obligations to prevent forced labour, to protect victims and to provide access to remedies. The World Social Protection Report 2014-15 issued by ILO demonstrated how social protection was an important investment in a nation's human capital and directly contributed to increased productivity.

82. It was heartening that decent work was increasingly being recognized as an important global goal that was relevant to all countries regardless of their stage of development. The newly launched Group of Friends on Decent Work for Sustainable Development would play a central role in mobilizing and coordinating political and technical support to promote employment, decent work and social protection as important priorities in the post-2015 development agenda, with a view to achieving the objective of shared prosperity and inclusive growth.

The meeting rose at 6.05 p.m.